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ABSTRACT

Pilot projects designed to increase the access of young unemployed Australians to adult and community education (ACE) were undertaken in one rural and one metropolitan adult, community and further education region with significant rates of unemployment among individuals aged 15-24 years. Two consortia were selected to conduct the pilot programs, which were designed to address the following issues: lack of knowledge of available ACE options; behavior and attitudes toward education that may not be considered appropriate in the ACE sector; and need for programs that are flexible, accommodating, and relevant to young people. In the first project, which was based at a suburban shopping center, the Certificate of General Education for Adults was used to meet participants' literacy needs and vocational aspirations. The second consortium established a project that provided local unemployed young people with the individual support (including employment assistance) they needed to access a range of existing programs. Both projects confirmed the following: the importance of developing networks with other organizations delivering services to unemployed young people; the need for close collaboration between ACE and secondary schools; the need for flexibility, involvement of parents and carers, and activities to develop young people's self-esteem and social skills. (MN)

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Adult, Community and
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Young & ACE

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Young & ACE

Young Unemploed People in Adult and Community Education

YOUNG & ACE

Young & ACE: Young Unemployed People and Adult and Community Education

A report prepared for the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board by the Gippsland and Northern Metropolitan Regional Councils of ACFE.

ISBN 0-7311-0894-9.

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1. Executive Summary

The Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, in collaboration with the Employment Branch of the Department of State Development, initiated this project focused on increasing access to programs in the adult dommunity education (ACE) sector for young unemployed people. The aim of the project was to use action based learning pilot projects in community based providers to develop models for system wide implementation. The project focused on the use of current ACFE programs, such as the Certificates of General Education for Adults, access and preparatory programs, and a wide range of general adult education programs to provide entry points to education for young people in a community setting.

The project was conducted in two ACFE regions, one rural and one metropolitan. The Gippsland Region and Northern Metropolitan Region both experience significant rates of unemployment in the target group of 15 to 24 years. Before community based providers were engaged to undertake development of the pilot programs, a one day meeting involving a focus group discussion was held in each region with representatives from community based providers, community based employment schemes and a range of other organisations with a focus on providing services to young people. The focus group discussion identified the following issues for and barriers that inhibit young people accessing ACE programs:

- lack of knowledge of ACE options available;
- behaviour and attitudes toward education that may not be considered appropriate in the ACE sector; and
- need for programs to be flexible, accommodating and relevant to young people.

As a result of a process seeking expressions of interest from community based providers in each region, two consortiums were chosen to conduct the pilot programs. In the Northern Metropolitan Region, the *Darebin Retail and Arts Project* was undertaken by PRACE, the City of Darebin (Safety Communities Project and Youth Services) and Preston Reservoir Skillshare. A consortium from a range of different organisations in Sale undertook the project in the Gippsland Region. Organisations in the Sale Consortium included Adult Community Education Sale (ACES), Sale Secondary College, Community Business Employment (CBE), Sale Access (formerly Skillshare) and Sale Neighbourhood House.

The *Darebin Retail and Arts Project* was based at a suburban shopping centre and was conducted with centre management support. The program used the Certificate of General Education for Adults effectively to meet the literacy needs and vocational aspirations of the participants. Young people involved in the program participated in a work experience placement in a retail business in the centre.

The Sale Consortium established a project that effectively met the needs of local unemployed young people by assisting them with individual support to be able to access a range of existing programs in organisations involved in the consortium. This included ACE programs in community providers and employment assistance programs through the local CBE scheme.

Findings from each of the pilot projects indicated that there is a need to address a range of issues, at the state, regional and provider level, if programs for the target group are to be successful in the ACE sector.

Key issues identified were:

- the importance of developing networks with other organisations who deliver services to unemployed young people in order to facilitate recruitment and referrals for assistance;
- the need to market programs available in the ACE providers for this target group to schools, other organisations who work with young people and other ACE providers;
- the importance of ACE providers working closely with secondary schools to develop early intervention strategies for young people wishing to leave school early or those who have already left;
- the need for professional development opportunities for community provider staff to acquire skills in developing and delivering programs to young unemployed people;
- the importance of sharing existing customised curriculum and programs throughout the sector, and in identifying skilled practitioners who are available in regions to develop and deliver programs;
- the benefit of work experience placements as part of any program but with an acknowledgment of the difficulties associated with finding host employers and the time involved in organisation;
- the need for flexibility with student contact hour targets because of the varying needs of potential participants and the difficulties associated with engaging and maintaining the involvement of unemployed young people;

- the importance of a suitable venue in which to deliver a program to this target group;
- the need to focus on developing self-esteem and social skills in programs for young unemployed people;
- the difficulties associated with access to transport for unemployed young people, particularly those in rural areas; and
- the need for involvement of young people's parents and carers.

The report contains delivery models for use by providers in planning and specific recommendations at the state, regional and provider level, around the key issues identified in the findings.

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2. Introduction

2.1 Background to the Project

In late 1996 the ACFE Board, in collaboration with the Employment Branch of the Department of State Development, initiated a project focused on increasing access to programs in the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector for young unemployed people. This project was in response to a commitment made by the Victorian Government in its Tertiary Education and Training Policy to:

> *Emphasise the role of the ACFE sector in providing entry points for lifelong education and skills acquisition where VCE or TAFE programs may not be immediately relevant (p8).*

While the environment of many community based providers is conducive to participation by groups who might not otherwise access more formal education, younger people have not traditionally been major participants in the ACFE program. Traditionally women over 25 years make up over 75% of enrolments in ACFE programs. The provision of education and employment programs and opportunities for young people has also changed. The development of technologies, workplace procedures and processes has contributed to the need for different literacy skills and practical applications of learned knowledge.

Significant numbers of young people leave school early, become unemployed and do not access existing alternative educational pathways, such as in the ACE sector, either because they are unaware of these options or programs offered are limited. With recent changes in federal government policies, such as restrictions to unemployment benefits for young people, and a decline in school retention rates to Year 12, it seems likely that the numbers of young people looking for alternative education pathways will increase.

2.2 The Challenge for ACE Providers

The type and scope of educational services currently offered do not necessarily meet the needs of those young people who are unable to, or do not wish to, complete the VCE or equivalent courses in a secondary school or TAFE setting. Students who leave school early are at greater risk of unemployment and often have a history of poor school attendance. Studies conducted in schools on this group can provide useful insights and direction for ACE providers. Peter Kilpatrick (1996), in a report on a project involving a series of interviews with

students with irregular school attendance patterns, concluded that for students at risk, the curriculum must be geared to the student's perceived needs. In most cases this would involve a primary vocational focus and a secondary enjoyment focus.

The University of Melbourne's Youth Research Centre's Disaffiliated Early School Leavers Project (Holden 1993) involved a longitudinal study of the pathways followed by 132 young people in three locations across Victoria. The study considered the reasons why young people choose to leave school early and concluded that:

1. *young people's decisions to leave school early were mostly a negative choice;*
2. *those decisions were based on their experiences of school as a place that allowed them a minimum of autonomy;*
3. *teacher-student relationships were perceived as non-existent at best and destructive at worst; and*
4. *young people felt that the curriculum had little relevance to what they wanted to do in "the real world".* (Holden 1993)

The importance of providing a comprehensive support structure for young people engaged in training programs cannot be underestimated. Issues such as homelessness often impact on young people and can have a devastating impact on their ability to continue with their education. Recent research into school students at risk of homelessness in Victoria showed that 11% of the young people in sample groups were potentially at risk, and there was no difference between the country and city sample groups (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1996). Other issues unemployed young people face can range from legal to health problems (including substance abuse), from financial to personal relationship problems.

ACE providers need to be aware that young people can experience difficulties in accessing appropriate services because

> *currently there exists a perplexing web of social service agencies, at the federal, state and local level which act incongruently and operate using individual budgets, objectives, service guidelines and rules and eligibility requirements*
> (Family Resource Coalition, 1996).

The Disaffiliated Early School Leavers Project (Holden 1993) pointed out that:

> *There is a lack of recognisable and flexible pathways between school, work, training and services. Efforts to address these issues need to be comprehensive and integrated.*
>
> *The personalisation of the referral system between services would help to facilitate early school leavers gaining access to services. Networking between workers in different services would mean that young people are 'passed on' to a person with a name and not just a title or an agency.*

Effective training programs for unemployed young people incorporate appropriate support and referral mechanisms to assist participants and increase the likelihood of successful completion. The networks established with other agencies and schools also provide a useful means of recruiting young people for programs.

3. The Project

3.1 Overview

This project involved the use of action based learning pilot projects in community based providers, to develop a model for system wide implementation. The project focused on the use of current ACFE programs, such as the Certificates of General Education for Adults, access and preparatory programs, and a wide range of general adult education programs to provide entry points to education for young people in a community setting. The linking of training and labour market programs to create a coherent and seamless client focussed approach was a feature of the project.

Unemployed young people aged 15 to 24 years were the target group for the project and pilot programs.

Community based providers involved in the project were funded to develop programs, conduct pilots, evaluate their success, and contribute to the development of a model for system wide implementation.

Two ACFE regions, one rural and one metropolitan, were nominated to conduct pilot programs. The Gippsland Region and Northern Metropolitan Region both experience significant rates of unemployment in the target group of 15 to 24 years.

Estimated Youth Unemployment Rates by Region July 1997

Region	15-19 years	20-24 years
North Western Melbourne	19.1%	17.5%
North Eastern Melbourne	20.9%	11.5%
All Gippsland	21.4%	15.8%
VICTORIA	18.8%	14.1%

Source: ABS. Labour Force Survey.

As a first step, before community based providers were engaged to undertake development of the pilot programs, a one day meeting involving a focus group discussion was held in each region. Participants included representatives from community based providers with an interest or experience in delivering to young people, representatives from community based employment schemes and a range of other organisations with a focus on providing services to young people. The focus group discussion in each region considered:

- Issues in identifying the target group and recruiting for programs;
- Barriers to unemployed young people becoming involved or experiencing success in programs in the ACE sector;
- Issues for providers in delivering to young people; and
- Elements of good practice in delivery of programs to young people.

Following the focus group discussions, expressions of interest were called for from community based providers to develop and deliver a pilot project with a target group of young people.

In the Gippsland Region six expressions of interest were received. The submission from a consortium of providers and a local secondary college in Sale was chosen to deliver the project because of the range of community groups involved in the consortium and because it had the greatest potential to find a way of addressing the large number of 15 - 18 year olds who were not only dropping out of the education system, but because of their age were ineligible for the employment agencies such as Skillshare and CBE.

In the Northern Metropolitan Region eleven expressions of interest from a range of community based providers were submitted. A consortium of Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE), Preston Youth Resource Centre (City of Darebin) and Preston Reservoir Skills Training Centre was chosen to undertake the project. All organisations involved in the consortium had a history of working with unemployed young people, and demonstrated effective links with other agencies who provide services to young people.

3.2 Feedback from Focus Group Discussions

Barriers and issues identified through the focus group discussions held in each region can be summarised as:

A. Lack of knowledge of ACE options available;

B. Behaviour and attitudes toward education that may not be considered appropriate in the ACE sector; and

C. Need for programs to be flexible, accommodating and relevant to young people.

A. Lack of knowledge of ACE options available

Both focus groups acknowledged that young people often have little knowledge or understanding of the education options available to them apart from TAFE and university. Educational organisations such as schools, especially in rural areas, had little or no understanding of the ACE sector or other training

options, although this appeared to be less of an issue in the metropolitan region where there was some history of schools, local government and selected adult education providers working together. Local youth workers were also identified as being important in assisting the development of links between the various options and young people. In rural areas where youth workers are rare, the role of networking and linking the various stake holders together has not occurred. All parties believed that it was imperative that this networking occur; without it, finding appropriate programs for young people was very difficult and even ensuring that those advising them were aware of all the options became quite difficult.

B. *Behaviour and attitudes toward education that may not be considered appropriate in the ACE sector.*

There was general consensus that a significant number of unemployed young people have a negative attitude to education or training programs based on their experience at school. Therefore it is very difficult for many of them to seriously consider further education as an option, particularly in the light of the perception of further education as promoted in most schools which is usually TAFE and university directed. A poor attitude toward education and often inappropriate behaviour can be quite daunting for many adult education providers who are used to adults who are willing and keen to learn. Young people often expect to have their needs dealt with instantly and can appear to be frequently loud, disruptive and demanding. Many ACE providers find this behaviour difficult to cope with on a number of levels. Many adult educators are not experienced in dealing with the demands of young people.

Most adult education organisations are reasonably quiet, reserved places that cater specifically to the needs of adults rather than young people. There is a general perception, and some anecdotal evidence, that other adult learners will not tolerate the noise or behaviour of young people. Some adult learners may find it discouraging to be around young people who may 'catch on' to concepts and skills quicker than them, as well as demanding the tutor's attention. The venue from which some adult education providers operate may also be inappropriate for young people who often like to have a "place of their own" with an environment not too reminiscent of school.

C. *Need for programs to be flexible, accommodating and relevant to young people.*

Unemployed young people can lack motivation, particularly after a significant period of unemployment with little or no involvement in education or training. Young people may have difficulty getting out of bed, especially when there is not much to do, little or no money and often isolation especially when friends are still at school, or in employment. Unemployed young people may be trying to deal with a range of significant issues as well as participate in a program. They may have a significant housing, health, legal, financial or personal relationship problem. Young people often have not developed the strategies for coping with crisis that can be expected from adults. Therefore the crisis can easily become the major focus for them and commitment to an education or training program may be put aside. Young people need support and assistance to access appropriate services as required, and a program which is flexible in its delivery and focus. The program needs to be able to be shaped to meet the individual needs of the young person. They often seek out a friendly 'space' which they can call their own and somewhere they can drop into when they feel the need. They also require someone to listen when they have a problem or issue that needs to be aired or resolved. TAFE institutes and universities offer programs in what can appear to be very foreboding buildings and may be seen as intimidating, rigid, long and too prescribed for many young people. Unemployed young people frequently cannot see the future clearly enough, either financially or socially, to commit to full time courses of twelve months or more in duration. Shorter, flexible and appropriate programs are therefore vital.

4. Northern Metropolitan Region Project Description

4.1 Background

Prior to the availability of funding for Young Unemployed People in ACE, the City of Darebin (Safer Communities Officer) approached PRACE and Kangan Institute of TAFE to develop a proposal for Northland Shopping Management to address concerns about community safety at Northland Shopping Centre. A two phased youth training program at Northland Shopping Centre (City of Darebin Shop Front, Training Room) was proposed: Stage One, a retail training project (City of Darebin and PRACE); Stage two, a recycling strategy course for young people (Kangan TAFE and City of Darebin).

In response to Northern Metropolitan Region's call for expressions of interest in the statewide Young Unemployed People in Adult Community Education Project, Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education, an accredited ACE provider, submitted a proposal for a retail training program identifying "early school leavers, youth over 15 at risk of long term unemployment, homelessness or entering the criminal justice system, and people from NESB" as "a high priority in determining program planning and delivery." The submission noted that the project would be jointly steered by PRACE, City of Darebin (Safety Communities Project and Youth Services) and Preston Reservoir Skillshare.

With funding secured, a steering committee was established and although other community agencies were invited to participate in the management of the project it was jointly managed for the duration by PRACE and City of Darebin with occasional attendance from personnel from Northland Shopping Centre Management, Skillshare and Melbourne City Mission.

While the majority of the funding came from ACFEB, City of Darebin contributed financially to the Community Arts component and provided in kind assistance with office and training room facilities, publicity and marketing materials, access to the community bus and hosted retail trader networking forums.

The Project Officer position was filled on a job share basis and was shared between a casual employee and a freelance contractor. In the initial weeks of the project both Project Officers were involved in the planning and development of the curriculum and program structure.

During the delivery of the training one worker was responsible for the day to day operations while the other created the framework for documenting the research component of the project.

The *Darebin Retail and Arts Project*, as the pilot project became known for the duration of the ten week training program, was conducted in the City of Darebin shop front training facility at Northland Shopping Centre between April and August 1997.

4.2 Relevant History of PRACE

Preston and Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE) has offered accredited basic adult education programs and vocational training to unemployed young people in the northern metropolitan region since 1994. Specific programs considered to have met the various needs of young people include the following:

- Learners Permit (Driver Education)
- Textiles Arts Graphics and Screenprinting
- Youth Landscape and Literacy
- Young Women and Technology
- Youth Retail Course

To deliver appropriate and meaningful programming for young people accessing adult community education in this region PRACE has to date taken the following steps:

- established a long term commitment to young people within the region;
- regularly liaised, networked and collaborated with government and community youth agencies, welfare groups, juvenile justice organisations, ACE providers, and Secondary Colleges to create educational and social pathways for individuals;
- created curriculum which reflected the needs of particular groups of young adult learners;
- taken a flexible approach to delivery to retain low level/high needs learners within educational programs (eg. Landscape and Literacy for juvenile justice referrals);
- conducted specific vocational training/Jobsearch courses to enhance the employment prospects of unemployed young people;
- acknowledged the pastoral care issues involved in working with young people (eg. appropriate referral);
- created youth friendly learning environments into our delivery strategies (eg. mixture of theory and practical sessions); and

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- structured support for youth program staff (weekly staff meetings where delivery difficulties and student concerns were dealt with.

4.3 Analysis of Need

In the development phase of the program, the Project Workers and Steering Group discussed the priorities to be addressed within the pilot project model and funded time frame. For PRACE it was an opportunity to:

- build on their overall knowledge of youth delivery;
- address and improve issues emerging from previous programs (retention rates);
- respond to perceived community concerns about young people at Northland Shopping Centre;
- create and nurture Corporate/Trader relationships, encourage industry input and to ensure training outcomes reflect industry needs;
- prepare and train unemployed young people for employment in new and expanding regional retail centres (Northland, Epping Plaza);
- devise strategies to effectively reflect the varying learning needs of unemployed young people (from low level overall skills to job ready participants);
- to review and clarify effectiveness of program management structures; and
- disseminate knowledge of youth delivery to other ACE providers unfamiliar with the dynamics involved in youth delivery

4.4 Pilot Program Details

Program Delivery

10 weeks

5 weeks classroom (Theory and Practical)

5 weeks supported work experience

Student Contact

20 hours per week

15 classroom contact hours per week

5 hour per week independent work

Location

Northland Shopping Centre (Retail component)

City of Darebin, Youth Resource Centre (Community Arts component)

Curriculum

Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA)

Moderated tasks included:

General curriculum options (level2)

Reading for knowledge(level 2)

Writing, practical purposes (level 3)

Oracy, active listening (level 2)

There were four distinct areas covered:

- Retail
- Jobskills
- Computers
- Community Arts

Students

22 were referred and recruited to the program.

14 students actually commenced.

AGE (years)	Males	Females
15	1	
18	1	
19		1
20	3	1
21	1	1
22	1	
23		1
24		2

Outcomes

Early exits from the program:

1 x 15 years male - TAFE, plastering course

1 x 20 years male - work experience

CGEA Statements of Attainment: 9 x GCO (Level 2)

Total Student Contact Hours delivered: 2280

PATHWAYS:	Males	Females
temporary employment		1
TAFE	1	1
retail traineeship	1	
investigating traineeships	1	1
work experience	1	
referral to jobskills		1
referral to further education	1	
undecided	3	2

4.5 Some Case Studies of Participants

Tracy

Tracy (19) joined the course though was reluctant to participate in the Arts Component. In lieu of attending the Arts Component a work experience was organised for her at the PRACE offices.

There were difficulties contacting Tracy when she was absent because she had no phone on. Tracy was a privately case managed unemployed young woman and a number of phone calls were made between the Project Officer and her Case Manager to support and retain her in the program. After she had been absent from the program for a week or so, serious personal issues were identified which prevented her from participating in the program. Her Case Manager made contact with the Education Coordinator at PRACE who referred her to CASA House and it is understood that this process enabled the appropriate organisations and authorities to become involved to assist Tracy and members of her family. By the end of the program Tracy had renegotiated with us to continue her work experience with PRACE when she felt emotionally able to do so.

Rodney

Rodney was a 20 year old male whose referral and pathway to this program was via a Youth Recreation Course also conducted by PRACE. It was evident during that program that Rodney required further education to address his low literacy, general life skills and his Jobskills. He entered the Retail Arts program during week three and had therefore missed much of the retail training sessions. His late entry impacted on organising a work experience to coincide with the timetable, however placement was secured with a hardware retailer and he commenced his placement after other students. One week into the placement he injured his knee in an out of training hours sporting event, and was unable to continue on placement.

Rodney was uncertain about joining the arts component and, initially, attended rather spasmodically. At one staff meeting it was revealed by the Community Arts tutor that Rodney had not turned up to an excursion to the Art Gallery the previous week. He had been involved in the planning of the excursion which included meeting in the city at a designated time and place. During the class following the excursion Rodney explained that he had gone into town but could not find anybody so had gone home again. The tutors discussed the contribution his low literacy and personal skills had made to his absence. Did he have the skills to get himself into town independently? Was the excursion too confronting? Would Rodney have attended if the group and met at the training room and travelled together to the city? As the arts project progressed Rodney gradually become more engaged in the process attending regularly. His comments to the Arts tutor were that he could not believe he could have enjoyed doing art.

By the end of the program Rodney was still uncertain about what he wanted to do and was investigating Traineeships and various further education courses.

Imran

Imran was a 21 year old ESL student referred from a Private Case Manager who expressed concerns about his work readiness, especially issues surrounding his ability to follow instructions. Tutors described Imran as hard working in class with a willingness and desire to achieve, although he was still uncertain about what he wanted to do. Imran's attendance was good, however the Project Officer had difficulties contacting him out of class hours.

A work experience was arranged at a quick printing outlet and for the initial weeks of the placement his supervisor reported that he was progressing well. Prior to the completion of the placement however, he did not attend and did not return. In following up, the Project Officer left messages at his contact number which were not returned. His Case Manager also had been unable to contact him and suspected there were housing and relationship issues involved.

In discussions with the work experience host she expressed concern about whether the placement had been too difficult for him due to his lack of numeracy skills, explaining that in a printing retail environment good numeracy skills were necessary. Although it may have been a contributing factor, it did highlight for staff the necessity for basic numeracy in retail training and the importance of carefully chosen work placements for students to ensure success.

Maggie

This 24 year old woman was a late enrolment and privately case managed. Her primary motivation in joining the program was to gain support in securing a position within the fashion industry. As she had worked in retail before and had done Jobskills courses she negotiated to attend some Jobskills sessions and the Community Arts stream. During the program Maggie secured temporary work with a fashion designer. The temporary position was continuing beyond the program.

Of the arts project she said "I have never thought of myself as artistic. Creative yes, but not artistic. The concept of creation and the offspring it produces is open to interpretation. Each to their own..."

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5. Northern Metropolitan Region Project Findings

5.1 Planning and Development

- The planning and development phase of an intensive vocational course requires more coordination hours than the delivery phase.
- Recruitment is a time consuming process and should be initiated early in the program's developmental phase.
- The availability of suitable training facilities dictated the weekly timetable, that is the training room was only available on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Funding timelines can pressure providers into delivery without adequate planning and development. Delivery needs to reflect more client and industry needs rather than funding deadlines.
- The regional industry networking envisaged in the planning stage was unrealistic given the coordination hours available, the time and cost involved in initiating trader interest, and the length of the training program.
- Organising events such as project launches took more hours to organise than expected and impacted on hours available for planning and development.
- Time was wasted trying to involve community representatives in Steering Group, which raised the issue of the logistics of networking within program development and delivery.

Conclusions:

- Funding for programs needs to be allocated over a longer period time rather than over a shorter period or according to a set timeline. This frees providers to deliver according to client demand, industry needs, other regional provision, availability of experienced staff, and access to suitable training facilities.
- Extended hours during the planning stages and reduced hours during the actual program delivery for Project Officers are needed to reflect the realities of planning and developing programs.
- The importance of budgeting for the costs of networking with community organisations, government youth services, industry representatives outside short course program structures.
- The development of registers of all programs offered regionally to this target group would assist to create seamless and coherent pathways for young people accessing ACE and assist in provider planning.

5.2 Recruitment and Entry Requirements

- Vocational programs where entry requirements reveal a bias toward "job ready" young unemployed people deny access to, and further marginalise low literacy level/high needs young learners and may discriminate against individual unemployed young people.
- Recruitment should begin as soon as the basic curriculum has been determined and the delivery dates and weekly timetable have been confirmed. Some strategies for recruitment can include word of mouth, fliers to all youth agencies and meeting places such as large shopping centres within the region, CES mail outs to clients, liaison with Private Case Managers, advertisements in local newspapers and networking with local secondary school personnel, such as the Careers Teacher or Student Welfare Coordinator, to link early school leavers to ACE providers.
- Face to face contact with interested individuals is the most effective means of engaging young unemployed people and any pre-course information sessions or interviews can include getting participants to outline their reasons for wanting to enrol in the program.
- In encouraging low literacy level/high needs young unemployed individuals to participate in vocational based curriculum programs it is important to identify factors that affect basic reading and writing skills in a short term program structure.
- Private Case Managers and CES are often unwilling to refer young unemployed people to programs unless they perceive the training offered will increase their client's employability or lead to further education.

Conclusions:

- Structure into delivery an acknowledgment of the importance of social justice issues associated with providing adult education programs for young unemployed people, in particular, the lack of educational opportunities for low literacy level/high needs learners and the need for systemic development of vocational/civic mix of programs.
- Use regional marketing and publicity campaigns and forums to acquaint community agencies, government organisations and secondary colleges of the pathways and options available in ACE and of the underpinning philosophies in adult education.

- Recognise at a funding and provision level that individual young people access ACE programs for a variety of reasons, not just to get a job.
- Within program budgeting and outside class structures, offer one to one or small group extra support for low literacy level young learners.

5.3 Recognition of Prior Learning

- No formal Recognition of Prior Learning procedures were established. At the onset of the program students were shown how to create a "skills audit". Besides listing prior educational achievements and past employment details, students were asked to list their personal skills and abilities, community participation, hobbies and sporting achievements.
- Initial interviews should determine their motivation for participating in the program. Students were encouraged to continually update their "skills audit" records to assist them to recognise and incorporate newly acquired skills and abilities into their sense of self.
- Staff requested each student to share the skills and abilities they wished to acquire in each subject offered. Staff also assessed students in their classes to identify any issues.

Conclusion:

- There is a need to create medium and long term monitoring mechanisms to analyse the factors which contribute to young unemployed people "circuiting the same level of learning" and to identify the barriers that prevent them accessing higher levels of education or vocational training.

5.4 Customisation

- For the Darebin Retail and Arts program a range of strategies were developed to address a number of key issues evident in previous programs such as:
  - delivering programs accessible and relevant to a wide range of young unemployed people (ie from low overall skill levels to job ready);
  - establishing industry links to ensure training program reflected industry realities;
  - rolling intake to address recruitment difficulties;
  - Community Arts processes to provide generic skills within vocational program; and
  - negotiated learning modules to enhance client focus delivery techniques.

Strategy employed	**Difficulties encountered**
dual curriculum (Retail & Arts)	time available for training prior to work experience
rolling intake	lack of appropriate induction processes for late enrolments
negotiated learning options	monitoring attendance
retailer networking	time involved in establishing links
delivery of generic skills via a community arts process	inability of some students to see work skills and lifeskills as interrelated

- For students accessing industry based training programs it is important to clarify the economic realities within the current labour market. Courses do not create jobs and young unemployed people should not be manipulated into assuming that the course is a "ticket" to a job or that it is their fault they cannot gain employment.
- In evaluating the program all staff agreed that the training component of the program was too short and the work experience too long.

Conclusions:

- There needs to be professional development for staff in providers to develop skills to create customised programs for young unemployed people.
- The sector needs to acknowledge that not all youth programs offered need to be vocationally dominated and driven and that broad based educational programs do provide meaningful and coherent pathways for young unemployed people.
- Establish registers of teachers and providers available to consult and troubleshoot for other ACE providers establishing youth programming.

5.5 Curriculum

- The curriculum used was based on the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA). The competencies developed in the program adhered to the principals outlined in the "Integration Across Streams" section to enable students "to participate fully in the community, work, and social life through gaining effective skills in reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy and mathematical thinking as well as general life skills".

- Delivery techniques used during the program included a mix of whole class, small group and individual activities and work experience. The broad structure of the program was as follows:

Weeks 1 - 5	Weeks 5 - 10
retail training	work experience
community arts	weekly work experience support workshop
job skills	individual work experience supervision
computer	community arts

- The five week retail stream focused on customer service, workplace communication (telephone technique, staff and employment issues), employer expectations, occupational health and safety issues, dealing with difficult customers, verbal and non-verbal communication, point of sale issues, personal grooming and presentation.
- The Job Skills workshops included being interviewed, resume and application writing, job search techniques (word of mouth, cold canvassing, CES), goal setting, career pathways, personal skills auditing and the change nature of the workplace. Basic computer and keyboard skills were also delivered.
- The Community Arts stream saw students develop competencies in working together meeting deadlines, self expression, planning, budgeting and resourcing, and researching. The Community Arts project ran for the entire ten weeks of the program creating a re-entry/alternative program option for students unable to access or sustain work experience. Although initially hesitant about the value of the Arts process, students, by the end of the program, experienced a sense of achievement at having created a work of art.
- Vocational curriculum should also include accurate information about the current practices within specific industries. For example, in the retail industry students need to know that there are no longer permanent jobs offered, only ongoing casual or part time employment, operating seven days a week with weekend rostered work.

Conclusions:

- There is a need for collation and publication of existing customised curriculum and programs for unemployed young people for use in the ACE sector. Programs offered must reflect industry needs and be responsive to changes in workplace practice in order to translate these into meaningful curriculum.
- There is a need for strategies that nurture corporate citizenship in relation to young unemployed people at the level of ACE provider through to state-wide.
- There is a need to develop strategies that foster long term regional and provider industry networks to ensure that curriculum reflect industry needs.
- Establish regional registers of practitioners skilled in the development and delivery of programs to this target group.
- Support for alternative and 'arts' based programs which can demonstrate the delivery of generic skills.
- Curriculum development workshops for providers and practitioners inexperienced in creating a short term vocational or vocational/generic mixed programs.

5.6 Work Experience

- The work experience conceived within the planning stages assumed the possibility of several short term placements over a five week period. In reality most participants remained in the one work experience for the duration of their placement. The two factors that contributed to this were individual preference and the time involved in organising student placements. Each student was supported in securing a work placement and supervised throughout their time in the workplace. Supervising tutors met with work experience hosts to discuss the expectations of the host, the student and PRACE. Work placement handbooks were created by PRACE for post placement feedback from retailers involved.
- Organising work experience for fourteen students is time consuming and should be reflected in funding submissions. Work experience was organised out of class hours in the pilot program and if student placements are to be arranged within classroom time it is recommended that a team teaching structure be employed. That is, from week one of a short vocational course one session per week should be timetabled with two trainers available to work with individuals and in small groups organising work experience placements.
- Students require a letter of introduction with course information, insurance details and contact names and numbers when 'cold canvassing' work experience options. This should be followed up by a pre-placement student, supervising tutor and work

experience host interview to clarify duration and expectations of the placement.

- Equally important is that each student and workplace host have a clear understanding of who the supervising staff member is and that each is provided with a contact number so that any issues arising in the workplace, such as absenteeism, can be dealt with immediately and efficiently.
- Program delivery should be structured to enable participants access to continued classroom training should they be unable to participate in, or sustain a specific work experience placement. To address the potential drop out rate at crucial points of the program our pilot had structured site visits where staff could discuss problems with the student and work experience host.

Conclusions:

- There is a need to establish regional registers of organisations, in particular industries, willing to host regular work experience and the names of employers who are happy to address group of students.
- There is a need to develop strategies to gain access to equipment and technology similar to that found at particular work places so that some hands on practical experience is incorporated into training prior to work experience placements. For retail training this might for example involve a cash register and a ticketing machine. Acquisition of such equipment should be in conjunction with industry representatives to ensure that appropriate state of the art training is available or perhaps a register of businesses willing to loan equipment or allow access business where on-site training can occur with equipment and technologies.
- Hours spent on work experience organisation need to be built into program budgets.
- Programs need to be structured to allow continued access to training for young unemployed individuals unable to participate in work experience.
- Strategies need to be developed to assist young people in obtaining clothing suitable for work experience and other resources that may assist in employability, such as a watch, diary or a haircut.

5.7 Student Contact Hours

- A total of 2280 Student Contact Hours were delivered to fourteen students during the ten week "Darebin Retail Arts Project". The majority of those hours were absorbed in retail training, job skills and work experience with the Community Arts stream taking a total of approximately 350 student contact hours of the total program offered. In Arts related learning, particularly if performance and/or exhibition are an expected outcome, out of class student contact hours should be factored into whole program delivery.
- If offering negotiable attendance and/or a specific stream of study, it is important to ensure that all tutors and trainers are provided with up to date participant attendance rolls to complete daily. These should be compiled weekly into a central attendance sheet to ensure that accurate overall student contact hours can be easily reviewed, and act as a check that students are attending the components of the course they have negotiated to attend.
- Various factors affect the student contact hours of programs for unemployed young people, including the high level of support necessary for participants presenting with low level skills. If programs attract high proportions of these participants it may be necessary to employ team teaching methods or opt for lower enrolments to adequately address the needs of these particular individuals. This can seriously impact upon the number of student contact hours delivered, and is a factor which must be considered when planning and budgeting for programs.
- Unemployed young people often do not complete programs or even commence them after enrolment because they have been successful in obtaining employment. While it is a very desirable outcome for the individual, this can have a serious impact on the outcomes of the program, in terms of student contact hours delivered.

Conclusion:

- Programs for young unemployed people need more flexible student contact hour targets.

5.8 Program Management

- Attempting to establish Steering Groups for short term projects such as this can create a top heavy and cumbersome structure which can complicate program delivery.
- Although PRACE and City of Darebin had successfully collaborated on several youth specific programs in the past, the research layer of the project saw both organisations critically analyse the underlying issues involved in regional collaboration.

- Some of the difficulties we experienced in the management of this project were:
  - time wasted attempting to coopt various community representatives onto the Steering Group;
  - the different agendas and priorities governing the organisations involved in the joint management of the project;
  - differences in approach to training and education by management members;
  - protocols necessary when disseminating marketing and publicity material, such as approval of copy and acknowledgment of participating organisations;
  - underlying conflict concerning ultimate funding accountability; and
  - the range of issues we attempted to address within the context of this project.
- Strategies for successful collaboration with other agencies include:
  - clear roles and responsibilities for each contributor.
  - clear lines of accountability for day to day running - which staff report to whom.
  - clarity about who is funding each aspect of the project.
  - determining who is actually the employer - the management group or a particular organisation.

Conclusions:

- Formal service agreements or a memorandum of understanding should be developed to clarify roles and responsibilities, when collaborating with other agencies in program delivery.
- Regional and local networking needs to occur outside the delivery structures of short term programming.
- Responsibility for management of short term programs needs to be clear and limited to a course coordinator rather than a larger management structure.

5.9 Networking

- The key networking strategy to be explored during this pilot program was the establishment of industry links, specifically with retail traders. This proved to be a costly and time consuming task and would not have been realised without the in kind support and leg work done by the Safer Communities Officer, City of Darebin, and most certainly could not have been absorbed into the program delivery budget.
- Early contact and liaison was established with a local Community Based Employment scheme, the North East Employment Project. While this was a useful link it did not develop as well as expected, and involvement declined as the program progressed. This was due to a number of factors including time constraints and changes in personnel. Indications were that Community Based Employment programs are in a position to offer placement services to young people who are much more job ready, and this is a role which could prove productive in the future.
- A mail out was also sent to all retailers in the City of Darebin informing them of the project and seeking through a questionnaire their input and support of the project. Of the 700 letters sent 17 replied and an evening retail forum was conducted at the Preston Town Hall. Approximately 12 traders attended and were provided with background on the project and offered their reflections and opinions on the training issues relevant to retail trading. Two further retail forums were held but attendance was poor.
- The feedback gained from these sessions was invaluable although it could not be fully integrated into the delivery of the "Darebin Retail and Arts Project" due to time constraints.
- The success of the retail forums was seen as establishing links, which can be built on rather than in terms of numbers who attended.
- The experience with this aspect of the project confirmed the difficulties in attempting to network while in the process of program delivery.

Conclusion:

- There is a need to support and budget for time required to create and nurture key industry relationships.

5.10 Staffing

- In addition to two project workers, three sessional tutors were employed to deliver various streams of the programs. Staffing issues inherent in short course delivery to young unemployed people include:
  - availability of skilled staff to deliver programs to this client group;
  - timetabling issues because most of the staff had other part time work;

- amount of time available to induct staff into the organisation;
- unfamiliarity with CGEA accreditation requirements;
- inability to form close working relationships with colleagues due to length of program;
- staff gaining further casual employment prior to the end of the project affecting their attendance at staff meetings;
- concerns about unpaid out of class preparation time and issues such as making phone calls from home;
- lack of experience in creating short course curriculum; and
- assumptions that short course delivery and coordination is easy.

Conclusions:

- There is a need for acknowledgment of the difficulties associated with staffing short term programs for this target group, and that there is not a large pool of casual practitioners with relevant experience available to run such programs.
- Provide professional development for staff interested in delivery to this target group, without previous relevant experience. Also consider developing staff skills in short program coordination.
- There need to be protocols to ensure that staff are reimbursed for time and any additional expenses, such as phone calls from home supporting work experience placements.
- Increase the project coordination hours if networking with other organisations is essential to program delivery.
- Build staffing costs to cover supervision of work experience into budgets.

5.11 Learning Environment

- The use of the City of Darebin Training Room at Northland Shopping Centre allowed PRACE to conduct the retail training course within a busy commercial environment.
- The use of appropriate training facilities is a factor in the retention of young unemployed people who will not return to environments where they feel uncomfortable.
- In securing external training venues for youth delivery it is necessary to clarify the availability of facilities for the duration of delivery, such as access to an office, telephone, fax, computer and photocopier.
- Access to office facilities is essential in programs with a work experience component so that placements can be arranged.
- Adequate ventilation in training rooms will positively impact on the effectiveness of delivery. It may be desirable to timetable practical sessions, such as workplace visits, for afternoons to provide variety and escape a training room which has become oppressive and difficult to work in.
- Unemployed young people will need access to a telephone to investigate job advertisements and make appointments for interviews. Similarly they need the facility to leave a contact number for messages from prospective employers, their Case Manager or other workers assisting them. If a telephone is impractical then a pager or mobile phone with a message service could be considered so that classes are not disrupted.
- Attitudes to young people in a space otherwise deemed adult space, and therefore "serious", need to be addressed. Attitudes can be silent and implied but young people will pick up on these and feel uncomfortable, which in turn may lead to dropping out of the program.
- Comfort items such as radios can assist in creating a youth friendly learning environment.

Conclusions:

- It would be useful to compile regional lists of suitable training facilities that are youth friendly environments.

5.12 Responsive Delivery

- PRACE is currently developing the next youth retail course and the feedback, findings and issues emerging from this program is being incorporated into the design and delivery of the next retail course and into other youth programming. The involvement in this descriptive research model has also influenced PRACE's approach to collaboration and regional networking.
- In the last course a series of computer classes were offered to participants as an introduction to technology. As these classes were poorly attended, the program training with computers will in future be embedded within the job skills component. This is a responsive move to coincide with the placement of

CES job vacancies on a web site accessible through the Internet.

- Feedback from private Case Managers indicated that they were happy to refer clients if they felt they were being show-cased to potential employers. In the next program a retail trader has been involved in the program design and has offered to visit the program weekly to offer an employer's perspective on a range of issues.
- Comments from staff revealed how nervous and self conscious students were in the initial training sessions - precious classroom time was often spent making students feel relaxed. In future programs there will be an orientation day, including an informal lunch and gathering with staff, retail traders and students.
- Other issues still under consideration include one to one interviews prior to the course commencement to establish each student's personal goals, clarification of protocols for acceptance into the course, addressing concerns in the selection criteria, assessing job readiness and determining the level of commitment to complete the course.
- It is recommended that the course include a shorter work experience component and include a follow up with classroom feedback during the final week, rather than weekly work experience support sessions.
- It is recommended that the course include a numeracy component to the retail training curriculum as per feedback from retail traders.
- In response to staff feedback about travelling time for short working hours, it is recommended that staff work for whole day sessions rather than two different tutors per day.

Conclusion:

- It is necessary to continue appropriate research into the design and delivery of programs to young unemployed people accessing adult community education.

6. Gippsland Region Project Description

6.1 Background

In July 1996 a group of concerned people in Sale, a regional city in Gippsland, gathered to discuss the issue of youth unemployment and education options. This group continued to meet at regular intervals during that year. The following organisations were represented at the initial meeting: Sale Secondary College, Community Business Employment (CBE), Adult Community Education Sale (ACES), TAFE, Sale Access (formerly Skillshare), neighbourhood houses, and the regional ACFE office.

The meeting recognised that:

a) Barriers which prevented youth from entering educational and employment training programs were lack of information, age and duration of unemployment. Relevant programs were being delivered by ACES, TAFE, Skillshare, neighbourhood houses and CBE.

b) Funding sources were needed for a youth/un-employment officer to be appointed in the Sale area.

Although some individual advisers had linked young people into the programs, most were not aware that they could independently access these programs.

When the ACFE Board sought expressions of interest for the Young Unemployed People in ACE project, this group of Sale education providers, having already identified a need in Sale, was successful in its tender. Funding was used to employ a project officer based at the Sale Secondary College to connect young unemployed people with relevant programs. The placement was strategic because the officer had access to early school leavers and those at risk of leaving.

The initial group became the project management committee. The funded position was job-shared by a career/vocational education and training (VET) adviser at Sale Secondary College and a student support officer. In the first weeks of the project both were involved in the planning and development of the program structure and the identification, interviewing and recruitment of participants.

6.2 Relevant Social and Educational Context of Sale

Sale is set in the centre of the Shire of Wellington, which has a population of 44,700, covers a 10,400 sq.

km and is situated 212 km. south east from Melbourne. There is a rail service from West Gippsland to Central Gippsland along the Princes Highway, but there are no public transport facilities within the city, or between small outlining towns and the city.

Rural isolation is significant with only 33.8% of the population living within Sale, 27.1% in surrounding townships and 39.1% in non rural areas. In 1994, there were 6421 young people aged 12-20 in the Wellington Shire, representing 14.1% of the total population.

The Wellington Shire relies heavily on its rural and agricultural base, which employs 15.6% of the total labour force. This is four times the Victorian State average (3.9%) (Wellington Shire Strategy Plan-June 1996).

6.3 Analysis of Need

In recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures Gippsland region had a 58% year 12 completion rate. Over forty two percent of people aged 15-19 years who were not at school or engaged in further education were unemployed.

Students at Sale Secondary College

The information contained in the chart below indicates retention from 1996 to 1997 and the status of the students who have left the school in this time period. Note that these figures include retention rates from the beginning of 1997 to June 1997 and the status of students who had left school.

Destinations of School Exits from Sale SC by Year Level

	YEAR 10		YEAR 11		YEAR 12		
DESTINATION	**Dec '96**	**Jun '97**	**Dec '96**	**Jun '97**	**Dec '96**	**Jun '97**	**TOTAL**
Unemployment	11	4	14	4	9	1	43
Employment	2	2	5	4	13	2	28
Apprenticeship	2		3		16		21
Traineeship	1	2	2	3	7	2	17
TAFE Course	5	2	5	5	47	3	67
University Course					37		37

There were limited pathways for young people who had chosen to discontinue formal school studies and declined TAFE modules or programs. Their exit from the school environment affected them, their families and the wider community.

The project used current ACFE programs, such as the General Certificate of Education for Adults, access and preparatory programs, and a wide range of general adult education programs to provide entry points to employment and education for young people from a community setting. One feature was the linking of training and labour market programs to create a coherent and seamless client focussed approach.

In the development phase, Project Officers and the Steering Group discussed the priorities of the pilot project model and funding time-frame. It was an opportunity for the Sale Consortium to:

- work together on a specific project for the first time;
- build on their overall knowledge of youth delivery;
- respond to perceived community concerns about young people in Sale who had left or were in danger of leaving school without firm education or employment options;
- devise strategies to effectively reflect the varying learning needs of unemployed young people from low level overall skills to job ready participants; and
- disseminate knowledge of youth delivery to other ACE providers unfamiliar with the dynamics involved in youth delivery.

6.4 Pilot Program Details

Program Delivery

10 weeks

Student Contact

20 hours per week

Curriculum

Certificates of General Education for Adults

General Curriculum Options

Reading and Writing

Other appropriate accredited courses as identified

Students

47 were interviewed and offered placement in the project

40 students participated

Participant Profile

	14 yrs	15 yrs	16 yrs	17 yrs	18 yrs
MALES	1	4	10	3	1
FEMALES	0	4	7	6	4

Project Outcomes

The project outcomes and pathways were varied and reflected the individualised programs as indicated in the chart below. Some youth accessed more than one program and / or were introduced to more than one consortium member.

Network accessed by the consortium	Male	Female	Age
Work Experience	4	1	2 x 15 male 2 x 16 male 1 x 16 female
TAFE	4		3 x 17 male 1 x 18 male
ACES	3	4	1 x 15 male 2 x 16 male 4 x 15 female
Neighbourhood House			
Skillshare	3	1	1 x 14 male 1 x 15 male 1 x 16 male 1 x 16 female
C.B.E.	1	2	1 x 16 male 2 x 17 female
Return to school	2	4	2 x 16 male 2 x 16 female 1 x 17 female 1 x 18 female
Voluntary work		1	1 x 16 female
Seeking employment	2	5	1 x 16 male 2 x 16 female 2 x 17 female 2 x 18 female
Employment		1	1 x 16 male
Retail Skills Centre		1	1 x 17 female
Distance Education		1	1 x 18 female
Didn't take part	5	2	3 x 16 male 1 x 17 male 2 x 16 female

Outcomes

Total Student Contact Hours (SCH) delivered	3,500
Total SCH Cost	$4.44

Participant Recruitment

The following broad selection criteria for the young people was developed by consortium members:

1. Unemployed youth who had previous contact with ACES, CBE or Skillshare.
2. Students who had left Macalister and Guthridge Campus, of Sale Secondary College (Sale SC) during late 1996/1997.
3. Students at Sale SC who had decided to leave school and had completed an 'Early School Leavers Form'. The form indicated to the school staff that the student was preparing to leave school. Careers, vocational and further education and support staff then gave additional support prior to the formal exit.
4. Students at Sale SC who had indicated that they would prefer to be in the workforce and were identified by class teachers as having low literacy and learning problems which may prevent them from entering further education. This identification could be further supported by the student's reports.
5. Integrated students who had poor literacy and numeracy skills or learning problems that may prevent them from accessing employment or further education. It was felt that additional work education may advantage these students.

A range of entry points at various community locations were decided upon. It was felt that this would improve the opportunity of youth to become part of the project, eg ACES, Skillshare, CBE and Sale SC. The Project Officer located at Sale SC contacted the majority of participants using school exit lists. A number of participants were self-referred through their current involvement in Adult Community Education, eg at ACES.

Individual interviews were conducted by the consortium member with whom the young person had made initial contact. Once the participant indicated their willingness to participate, a personal development plan was developed according to their needs, abilities and interests. Their plan was informally documented in terms of the individual's preferred outcomes. The majority of the youth interviewed were not attending school and they were contacted and invited to attend an interview to gain a better understanding of this new option.

The young people were transported to optional training and/or employment sites, introduced and given additional time decide whether they wished to continue with the project. The majority chose to participate. This group were formally assessed and their training and/or employment pathways were planned and initiated.

6.5 Case Studies of Participants

Casey

16 year old Casey was not attending school and was disappointed because the timing of entry back into school was proving very difficult. She was referred to the student support officer who was also a Project Officer for this project. There was a meeting with Casey and her parent, and an evaluation of the school needs and an initial unit selection was made. It was finally agreed, in consultation with Casey, the student manager and her parent, that Casey return to school in Term 3 in a part time capacity. This was considered the most appropriate course of action by all concerned.

In the meantime, the Project Officer made an appointment for Casey to meet an ACES staff member to access ACE programs prior to Term 3 and also made an appointment with the careers teacher who was also a Project Officer. It was decided that Casey would undertake some mathematics tutoring prior to returning to school in Term 3. The maths was level 1 of Numeracy within the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA) initially one to one with the view of Casey joining a small group of CGEA Numeracy when she was feeling more confident within herself.

At the same time as Casey was undertaking the CGEA at ACES, she was also found 3 weeks of work experience - 2 weeks with one employee and 1 week with another. She enjoyed her work experience and a noticeable difference was observed by the Project Officer. She seemed to be taking more care of herself and responded well to ACES staff. She was more confident and looked forward to on-going maths tutoring at ACES.

Casey has returned to school and has ongoing support from a mathematics tutor from ACES. She has very much enjoyed her work experience. She is happy with her course and the support she was offered from people working within the project.

Michael, Michael and Colin

Michael 15 years old, Michael and Colin both 16 years old joined the pilot project because they had become difficult students and it was clear to students, parents and teachers alike that their hearts were not in continuing at school. The three young men were interviewed with their parents and their previous house leader by a Project Officer. They were introduced to Skillshare, ACES and CBE. They opted for a Landcare course.

All the boys took time to settle into the Landcare course but they chose to complete an extra three weeks. Each of them has expressed interest and enjoyment in their course and families have supported them to continue with the course after the pilot project concluded.

David

16 year old David's school attendance was spasmodic and he left school. He had enrolled and left on an earlier occasion. David was contacted by phone and an interview was arranged. During the interview David indicated that he wanted to work with plants. With support from the family, work experience at a local nursery was arranged by a Project Officer.

The Nursery was pleased with David's work. Following the initial work experience David made no contact so the Project Officer rang him. Two weeks later he dropped in and spoke to both Project Officers.

David wanted to try plastering so the Eastern Victorian Group Training was contacted and an interview was arranged with them. In the meantime, the Project Officers organised work experience for him as a plasterer. David is now hoping to obtain an apprenticeship as a plasterer.

Shifts in choice of work area are common amongst young people, many of whom are unclear about the right career path for them.

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7. Gippsland Region Project Findings

7.1 Promotion of ACE Programs

Early interviews with prospective young people showed that ACE was not seen by them to be offering relevant educational pathways. This uninformed view of ACE was also held by those advising them. ACE providers need to adequately market their current courses to this target group.

Conclusions:

- ACE's profile should be raised by having ACE programs published in school handbooks and by offering programs in conjunction with mainstream units in schools.
- Marketing tools should be utilised by ACE providers to promote and encourage participation by young people in their education programs.

7.2 Support for Young People

Young people will undertake further education, training and/or employment options, when they are encouraged and supported. Of the forty-seven young people who were interviewed for this project, forty chose to participate. The seven who chose not to participate all expressed a positive view of the ACE options available to them.

Whilst young people benefit from community support and awareness of their needs, their ability to benefit is significantly affected by the length of time for which they are unemployed. Early intervention is essential to maximise their use of opportunities. The Sale project focussed primarily on 15 to 18 years olds, who had recently (within 12 months) left school or were identified as being in risk of leaving school.

It is recognised that as the length of unemployment develops, so can a poor attitude toward further education. The "I'm never going to get a good job so why bother" attitude can make it harder to secure and maintain employment. If young people can find alternative options to school before rejection, sense of failure and low self esteem set in, there is a much better chance of a positive outcome. The importance of support for young people during this time is emphasised. Tutors and other workers who can support and encourage individual young people are vital to the success of any program.

The ACE sector is good at supporting individuals. Community based ACE providers are renowned for their empathy and individual support and encouragement given to their adult participants. If such support is so important to adults, how much more important is it for disillusioned, unemployed young people who often find it daunting to work through the maze of regulations and requirements of various government departments. They need to be supported by people who can offer assistance when needed and also understand the educational pathways available and how to access them.

Conclusions:

- Programs developed specifically for unemployed young people should include a high level of individual support for all participants.
- Community education providers need to develop networks to enable young people to make a seamless transition from one provider to another, and for the level of support to be continued.

7.3 Focus on Self Esteem

There was a noticeable improvement in self esteem, confidence and the social skills of young people involved in the project.

Staff working in the various organisations involved in the project commented on and acknowledged this improvement. It was also evident in the large number of young people and their parents who decided that the improvement in attitude, confidence, self esteem, social skills and educational progress begun in this pilot was significant enough for them to continue in programs after the pilot had finished. This involves a financial and long term commitment by the young person and their family. Many of these young people now have the confidence, enthusiasm and desire to undertake further education within the ACE sector, and to consider other training and education options.

Conclusion:

- Programs developed for unemployed young people need to place a specific emphasis on the development of self esteem and the improvement of social skills.

7.4 Cooperative Arrangements

This project succeeded in establishing cooperative links between a variety of organisations, with a wide range of funding sources. These funding sources, possibly seen as proscribed by some providers, have not constituted a barrier to cooperative activity to increase choices for young people.

Conclusions:

- There is a need for programs which explicitly target young people seeking to leave school early, or those who have left school, and link them to other educational pathways, training and employment programs.
- ACE providers need to work together, in consultation with secondary schools and other agencies who work with young people, to develop flexible, early intervention strategies which address the needs of these young people.

7.5 An Integrated Approach to Program Delivery

The integrated team approach utilised in this project was instrumental in bridging the gaps between students and programs available. The success of this pilot project was dependent on the consortium approach to the issue of young unemployment people accessing the ACE sector. Organisations, such as secondary schools, ACE providers, TAFE institutes, CBE schemes, and Skillshare programs cannot work in isolation if they wish to cater for the needs of young people. Much of the perceived 'failure' of the current system and education organisations due to inflexibility and restrictions which deal with a narrow range of needs.

It was exciting to sit with a group of CBE workers, career and vocational teachers from the secondary college, and the job and the career coordinator at ACES and hear them acknowledge the widening of employment and educational opportunities for the young people in Sale. All three organisations work with their own network of employers and educational organisations which they have fostered and nurtured over the years. Each organisation tapped into a different group of employers and educational organisations which meant that employment and education options were almost tripled. This was a real bonus for matching the right young person with the right employer and educational organisation. Whilst this was a positive feature, it was clear that many employers wanted to work with the person representing the organisation with which they had an existing relationship. Although employers were receptive and supportive of youth when approached, many were unaware of government initiatives. This highlights the need for a team approach, with individuals and individual relationships being retained and developed.

The activation of a consortium of varied organisations does not occur quickly or easily. Many hours of hard work go in to creating a successful consortium. Organisations and departments do not necessarily interface well with each other, and each part of the consortium may not fully understand or appreciate the strengths and limitations of the other parts. This knowledge is gained over time and must be nurtured. This was true in Sale where the consortium had not worked together other than in occasional meetings. The weeks leading up to the recruitment and program delivery were hard work and took a very conscious decision from all parties to continue and build a working relationship. Strengthening the partnerships will benefit the young people of Sale.

Conclusions:

- Management of programs developed for young people should be broadly based and include representation, where possible, from other educational providers, employment programs, employers and service groups.
- Community organisations need to work together to develop processes to enhance the opportunities of youth to continue with formal education, training and employment programs.

7.6 Public Transport Issues in Rural Victoria

The lack of adequate public transport specifically in country regions hinders many young people accessing programs.

This is a constant frustration about transport in rural areas which is heightened when school buses run routes which the young people no longer at school cannot access. Changing the rules and regulations in regard to bus travel would help overcome the lack of other transport options for young people, who are no longer at school. Many young people cannot get themselves to work or further education unless they have parents or friends who can drive. There is often an expectation that once turned 18, all young people will get their licence. Low literacy and self esteem, lack of opportunity and necessary finances each play a part in the large number of rural young people without a drivers licence. Those with a licence will often not be

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able to afford to buy a car. The lack of a licence then limits their chances of getting a job as well as building on the frustration of 'nothing to do and no where to go', which can lead to less socially acceptable and legal ways of getting from point A to point B in rural Victoria.

Conclusions:

- There is a need to address the issue of inadequate public transport in rural areas and, if possible, find a way to allow unemployed young people to be able to use school buses when seats are available.

7.7 Employment Assistance

The proposed Commonwealth Youth Allowance scheme has important implications for young people. The increased load placed on the training system, contributed to by students remaining in school longer and students returning to school, will provide a variety of training opportunities for entrepreneurial activity from ACE providers. Close relationships between ACE and other training providers and employment assistance agencies are vital to take full advantage of these opportunities.

Conclusion:

- Community providers need to be informed of the implications of government initiatives, and need to develop ongoing relationships through the network of youth welfare agencies.

7.8 Choices for Young People

Young people involved in the project explored various options available to them prior to making a commitment to a particular program.

Seven young people who were offered a place on the project chose not to participate in this pilot project. This was not a negative - young people are empowered by the opportunity to choose the direction their life will follow. The ability to choose between a variety of options, including ACE programs, is more positive than feeling that they only have two options - school or unemployment. There is no right option, model or direction - each young person needs to choose what's right for them.

Conclusion:

- Unemployed young people need to be given access to information about the full range of options available to them, including relevant ACE programs, and assisted in exploring the relative merits for them of each option.

7.9 Parent/Carer Involvement

Parents and carers of the young people involved were pleased their child was invited to participate in the project.

Parental involvement and encouragement for their children to participate was seen as really important for the success of the individual. Where parents or carers are a significant influence in young people's lives, their approval and encouragement is vital.

Conclusion:

- The involvement of parents and carers of unemployed young people of youth participating in programs should be encouraged where possible.

7.10 Funding Structure

The individualised delivery model tried at Sale presents an alternative delivery model in circumstances where participant numbers are low.

The individualised delivery model was cost effective and practical as it allowed young people to choose from a wide variety of program options. This would not have been the case had a specific program been developed and indefinitely delayed due to low participation. This issue was highlighted in the PRACE project where the larger population base produced sufficient numbers to begin the program. It is unlikely that groups of 10 young people all wanting to do the same thing at the same time will be available.

This model allowed a large number (40) young people to participate, and this is attributed to the wide variety and flexibility of the program.

Conclusion:

- Where numbers of young people looking for homogenous programs does not justify a dedicated program, funding needs to be available to support and place young people into existing courses as required.

8. Delivery Model

8.1 Pedagogical Issues

Teaching groups of young unemployed people in an adult education context requires an understanding of individual needs and classroom issues likely to surface. The following pedagogical issues were identified by the project team at PRACE as key factors in any attempts to create a coherent and seamless client-focussed approach and to effectively train and educate young unemployed people:

- Young people are individuals with personal and particular desires, aims and goals.
- Youth education and training is a distinct element of life long learning.
- Open access to ensure low level skill and high needs of some unemployed young people are catered for within programs offered.
- Curriculum needs to be flexible to reflect the disparate personal goals and learning needs of participants involved.
- The importance of building long term relationships with young people as they gain all the skills necessary to pathway to employment and sustain it.
- For early school leavers educational failure may be a recent experience affecting self confidence and contributing to a fear of failure.
- Reading and writing skills are often misinterpreted by low level literacy participants as measures of intelligence, rather than as skills they lack competency in yet. They assume "I must be dumb because I can't do this," rather than "I have not mastered this skill yet".
- The majority of adult learners access adult education by choice and may draw on other life experiences, such as family or hobbies, to gain confidence if literacy skills are low. Young participants do not have the same pool of life experience to draw from and this can further highlight a sense of failure.
- Active listening skills are often underdeveloped in young adults learners whereas adult learners often have highly developed listening skills particularly when they have accessed information that way for years because of low literacy levels.
- Literacy for young people encompasses learning skills, personal presentation and critical analysis of individual participation (that is "am I achieving what I enrolled to achieve?"): and it must address lack of self discipline, poor concentration, lack of self esteem, lack of organisational skills, inability to set goals, and the inability to identify a pool of skills or qualities they possess and can build on.
- Young adult learners may react and respond to trainers with a preconceived notion of teachers as disciplinarians, based on experiences from school, rather than as facilitators of the learning process.
- Accepting that tutors and participants in programs may have personality clashes highlights the need for clear grievance procedures and problem solving strategies to be in place.
- Inappropriate classroom behaviours, such as distracting others, swearing and refusal to participate in activities, evident within this group reflect the low level learning skills rather than an unwillingness to learn. These behaviours have often been developed to disguise deficiencies, such as a lack of basic literacy.
- Negotiating a group Code of Conduct with participants at the commencement of a program. This needs to reinforce responsibility and shift away from the expectation of an "if you don't behave this way you are off the course" disciplinarian model, to taking responsibility for your own behaviour and respecting the rights of others - "you are disrupting the learning process of others - take time out, regroup and rejoin."
- Poor and underdeveloped relationship skills in young adult learners can affect classroom interaction. This may manifest itself in racism, attitudes to disability, aggression and sexism, and can disrupt and distract the group learning process.
- Issues affecting attendance and participation may include housing difficulties, family problems, juvenile justice concerns and may need to be addressed and supported throughout the program.
- Participants who feel they have been forced into attending by Case Managers or DSS threats of suspension of unemployment benefits may harbour an "I'm only here because I have to be" attitude and refuse to participate in classroom activities. Tutors attempting to develop in students an "education by choice" need to acknowledge student's reality to ensure a productive classroom rapport is realised.
- Refugee and homeless students without parental guidance may not have out of training hours support, and this can affect attendance, punctuality,

motivation and the ability to see a long term future for themselves. In the classroom this may manifest as a "what's the point" attitude.

- Financial difficulties may mean young unemployed people do not possess appropriate clothing for any work experience component of a vocational course.
- After completing vocational ACE programs, young unemployed people may still have no fixed idea about what they want to do for a career. For many it is just another step on the way to deciding on their final goals, and they need to be able to explore different pathways along the way.

8.2 A Checklist for Providers

Program Management

- Consider involving a range of relevant organisations in the management of programs, such as on a reference group with representation from other ACE providers, employment programs, employers and service groups.
- Ensure there is a clear management structure and defined roles and responsibilities, especially where there are one or more organisations working together as a consortium on a program.

Staffing

- Use staff with appropriate experience of working with young people or consider professional development to skill staff.
- Staff need to be sensitive to the needs and issues that young unemployed people can bring into the classroom.

Links with other agencies offering support to young people

- Develop links with and referral mechanisms to other agencies offering services to young people. These need to be established prior to the program commencing.
- Foster links with agencies that can provide the services required, such as advice and assistance with housing, health, legal, financial or personal relationship problems.

Networks with other training and education providers and employment placement services

- Providers should promote links with other education and training programs offered within the area, as well as appropriate employment services and programs in order to create seamless and coherent pathways for young people.
- This networking should lead to young exploring and accessing the full range of options available to them with the facility to move between different programs in a supported and effective manner.

Protocols for assisting a young person in crisis

- Protocols should be developed and adopted by all staff about how to deal with a young person in crisis. Time needs to be given to listen to the problem, provide support and develop an appropriate course of action.
- Referrals to another agency need to made in a manner that will offer support to the young person and ensure they are able to access the service required.

Choice of appropriate venue

- Use of an appropriate venue for delivering programs to this target group is considerably important - young people must feel comfortable in the venue.
- Negative attitudes from staff or other adult students towards young people must be addressed, such as believing that because young people are louder and more visible as a group that they are not serious about their learning.
- Provide access to a phone or message system for contact by prospective employers or other workers. Youth oriented posters around the room and a radio to listen to during breaks are a good idea.

Curriculum choice and program design

- The choice of appropriate curriculum depends on the needs of the young people targeted by the program, however, it is worth noting that both pilot programs used the CGEA to some extent as a basis for program design.
- Low literacy level is often the most significant barrier to employment or further education for this group. The ability to effectively customise using the CGEA to suit the needs of a particular group was particularly evident in the PRACE Darebin Retail and Arts Project.
- Ensure there is an opportunity for participants to develop self-esteem and social skills.

Marketing the program and recruiting participants

- Begin recruiting for the program well in advance.

- Use a variety of strategies such as word of mouth, fliers to all relevant youth agencies within region, CES mail outs to clients, liaison with Private Case Managers, advertisements in local newspapers and networking with local secondary school personnel - the Careers Teacher or Student Welfare Coordinator - to link with early school leavers.
- Consider initially recruiting more than is desirable to allow for dropouts due to finding employment or taking another course.
- Explain to interested young people the economic realities within the current labour market, so that they understanding that the course is not necessarily a "ticket to a job".

Enrolment

- Face to face contact with interested individuals is the most effective means of engaging young unemployed people. Conduct an orientation session for young people who have enrolled or are interested. Let them meet informally with tutors to establish relationships.
- Build in a rolling intake mechanism to address difficulties in recruitment and ensure that there is flexibility in delivery to enable participants who begin late not to be disadvantaged.

Initial assessment of students

- Conduct Recognition of Prior Learning, where possible, and undertake a personal skills audit with participants.
- The skills audit can identify educational achievements and past employment details, list personal skills and abilities, community participation, hobbies and sporting involvement. This is both useful for staff working with the group and for the young people to track progress through the program and use in job seeking.

A work experience component

- It takes time to establish a list of possible work experience hosts and this process needs to be begun prior to the commencement of the program.
- Allow time for staff to support participants in work experience placements. Staff should be reimbursed for time spent in workplace visits and any additional costs such as travel and telephone calls from home.
- Develop strategies to assist young people in obtaining clothing suitable for work experience and other resources that may assist in employability, such as a watch, diary or a haircut.

Career information for participants

- Participants need access to the full range of options and pathways available to them following the program.
- Participants need support and encouragement to explore options and assisted with transition into other programs.

Transport issues for participants

- Assist participants with travel arrangements to the program venue program and any work experience placements. This can be a significant barrier to participation and should be discussed with participants during recruitment.
- Determine possible access to a school or community bus

Parent/Carer involvement

- Encourage carer involvement, particularly with younger participants. The support and encouragement of a parent or carer can be an important factor in individual success.

9. Recommendations

9.1 State-wide Recommendations

That the ACFE Board

- Ensures life long learning concepts translate into systemic long term provision of appropriate education and training for unemployed young people by ACE providers;
- Assists in the collection and publication of curriculum and program ideas designed for unemployed young people participating in the ACE sector;
- Promotes awareness of the potential of ACE for young people; and
- Develops a plan to implement the recommendations of this report.

9.2 Regional Recommendations

That the Regional Councils of ACFE:

- Encourage networks between community education providers and other government and non-government agencies so that unemployed young people have access to seamless and well supported transition from one educational provider to another;
- Ensure that programs developed for unemployed young people are underpinned with specific emphasis on the development of self esteem and improvement of social skills.
- Facilitate professional development programs for providers and practitioners undertaking youth programming which highlight the specific and particular issues facing young unemployed people accessing ACE environments and classrooms.
- Facilitate regular forums for providers where issues related to delivering programs to this target group can be discussed and information disseminated.
- Instigate regional marketing and publicity campaigns to acquaint community agencies, government organisations and secondary colleges with pathways and options available in the ACE sector and of the underpinning philosophies in adult education.
- Where possible, ensure that the management of programs developed for unemployed young people is broadly based, including representation from educational providers, employers, government initiated programs and service groups.
- Enable programs to be developed for unemployed young people which are short, interesting and flexible, not only in the entry and exit points, but also in delivery.

9.3 Recommendations for Providers

That ACE providers offering programs for the young unemployed:

- Work with other relevant organisations, including schools, to establish local area programs for young people seeking to leave school early and those who have already left school, and link them into other education and training pathways, including ACE, and employment programs.
- Judiciously address issues such as venue selection and staffing for the delivery of programs for young people.
- Allow local circumstances and program delivery to determine the most appropriate timing, placement and delivery of youth programs with attention being given to other adult participants, noise levels, building use and class composition.
- Liaise with schools to publish ACE programs in school handbooks, and if possible offer programs in conjunction with mainstream units.

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